Report Information from ProQuest

May 15 2013 15:08

Table of contents

Putting It All Together

Author: Aronson, Marc; Bartle, Susan M

Publication info: School Library Journal 58. 11 (Nov 2012): n/a.
ProQuest document link

Abstract: At the moment, 46 states (plus Texas, which has adopted similar guidelines under another name) are starting to put Common Core's English Language Arts guidelines into practice, and that's great news for school librarians, especially since your skills, knowledge, and collections are essential to its success. In turn, Common Core is your best chance to show your administrators and teaching colleagues how valuable you are - and that's crucial in a sluggish economy in which many media specialists' jobs are on the chopping block. Commons Core's ELA standards, which aim to prepare students to succeed in college and in their careers, have changed the way that reading is taught in K-12 schools. Instead of emphasizing fiction, as in the past, the new guidelines focus on informational texts.

Full text: Putting It All Together Wondering how to put Common Core into practice? It's easier than you think. This fall, as we've traveled around New York State doing workshops for librarians and teachers on the Common Core State Standards, we've been living and breathing the new education standards. Common Core's English Language Arts (ELA) guidelines (www.corestandards.org) have become as familiar to us as our morning coffee. We assume that's true for many of you, too. But just to make sure, we'll share a little background information on the standards, and then away we'll go. At the moment, 46 states (plus Texas, which has adopted similar guidelines under another name) are starting to put Common Core's ELA guidelines into practice, and that's great news for school librarians, especially since your skills, knowledge, and collections are essential to its success. In turn, Common Core is your best chance to show your administrators and teaching colleagues how valuable you are--and that's crucial in a sluggish economy in which many media specialists' jobs are on the chopping block. As you've probably heard, Common Core's ELA standards, which aim to prepare students to succeed in college and in their careers, have changed the way that reading is taught in K-12 schools. Instead of emphasizing fiction, as in the past, the new guidelines focus on informational texts (everything from books of facts, dates, and names to record compilations that are fun to browse to surveys, chronologies, and atlases) and narrative texts (nonfiction books in which an author crafts an arc with a beginning, middle, and end, while remaining true to her sources). So rather than encouraging students to respond subjectively to short stories, chapter books, or novels ("I feel this way about that character" or "I can relate to the story"), the Common Core requires students to analyze the evidence they find in fiction and nonfiction texts. Who's most likely to know what informational and narrative texts are available in your school library and in its databases? Who's an expert at identifying books that treat the same subject from different perspectives? Who excels at tracking down and evaluating the best texts for teachers and students? You, the school librarian. The art of clustering Your knowledge of and access to a wide variety of resources makes you the perfect keeper of the Common Core. And "clustering" can be an important ally in this key role. Clustering is the art of exploring a topic with a number of related resources, and it typically involves arranging those materials in attractive, student-friendly displays. In the land of the Common Core, we see your library, with its print and digital resources, as the true information superhighway, and you as the real-life 3-D search engine. Clustering is one way to make that evident to anyone who walks through your door--from a student who's casually browsing your collection to a class that's working on an assignment. What does this approach look like in action, and how can clustering support Common Core? Let's start by looking at one of the state standards initiative's main goals: to help kids think about the "craft and

structure" of a text, which can include everything from recognizing a table of contents to understanding the way an author uses chapter titles, subheads, and sidebars to organize information. When we recently visited Dunkirk Elementary School #7, in western New York, we randomly pulled four books about penguins from its library and shared them with a group of teachers. Were all of those titles for K-2 readers the same? Of course not! One had no page numbers, two lacked glossaries, and only one book mentioned that its information had been vetted with an expert. Even if all of these books are intended for kids in the same grade and deal with the exact same topic, we explained to our workshop participants, they each go about it very differently. Even if you don't have time to review books like these with a class, a cluster does the work for your students--because now, instead of searching your shelves for "a book on penguins," kids are exposed to a conversation among various titles on the same topic. The goal isn't necessarily for kids to say, "Book A is better than book B." Rather, it's to get students to think about the different approaches to informational and narrative texts: Why does a certain title present information this way, and another that way? No book covers everything that can be said on a subject, so everything in--or not in--a nonfiction book is the author's decision. We need to help students recognize those choices. How can you help kids notice those distinctions? One of the easiest ways is to display three books that have contrasting features and then accompany each title with a Post-it note or a notecard (as in your local bookstore) or with great big arrows or gold stars that point out what's special about the particular title. For instance, the card might say, "This title has a great table of contents" or "Here's a book that cites five sources." By adding--or inviting your students to add--these messages (which we call "shelf talkers"), you can highlight important text structures and features, including author's notes, captions, and back matter. Clusters can also add a little zing to your lessons. When Ayodele Ojumu, who's now the librarian at one of the schools we visited (PS 204 Lafayette High School in Buffalo, NY), was an elementary school teacher, she gave a prize to the student who found the book with the most text features or two titles that treated the same subject the most differently. We've also seen media specialists hand each student a scorecard to tally the number of text features they find in nonfiction library books in the collections--and see which child discovers the most. Clusters can help even the youngest students to become library detectives by searching out the differences in how various authors and books handle the same topics, and those kids may end up feeling even smarter since they've learned what an informational and narrative text is expected to include. By taking advantage of clusters of materials, you're also getting an opportunity to show off your library's collection and its strengths. What about older kids? So far, we've been talking mostly about using clusters to teach young students about simple text elements. But things get really interesting in middle school and high school. Starting in fifth grade, the new benchmarks require students to "analyze multiple accounts of the same event or topic, noting important similarities and differences in the point of view they represent." Common Core's focus on point of view is designed to train students to recognize how an author uses evidence and rhetoric to influence readers so that young learners can compare, contrast, and discriminate among arguments--and a cluster is a perfect tool for the task. For example, instead of relying on a single book to examine a complex, controversial topic, like, say, gun control, you can display a whole range of resources--including books, magazine articles, websites, documentary clips, and audio recordings that you've carefully selected--which reflect various points of view. Do you see what's happening? Your library is coming alive. You're no longer offering students materials that are passively waiting to be read. Instead, you're putting kids in touch with content creators who are asserting their distinct positions, trying to win the hearts and minds of their readers and listeners, competing for their attention. That's exactly what we saw when we visited Buffalo's City Honors School. A dynamic team of librarians created a cluster on boxing that included the following items: Robert Lipsyte's classic YA novel The Contender (HarperTeen, 1987) placed next to Mark Kriegal's new adult sports biography, The Good Son: The Life of Ray "Boom Boom" Mancini (Free Press, 2012); Charles Smith's Twelve Rounds to Glory (Candlewick, 2007) or Walter Dean Myers's The Greatest: Muhammad Ali (Scholastic, 2001); a synopsis of HBO's 2009 documentary Assault in the Ring ; an article about women's Olympic boxing, and a URL for "Rock Steady Boxing"

(www.rocksteadyboxing.org), a website that talks about boxing, exercise, and how the training may be useful for some Parkinson's patients. Now, when kids walk into the media center, they'll immediately see a display that features a story about personal growth, a true-life tragedy (Mancini accidently killed another boxer in the ring), and some fascinating information on heroism, racism, corruption, gender, fitness, and the evolution of gladiatorial combat. If the librarians have time, they can guide kids through the various relationships among those resources. If not, the inviting display, with its brief descriptions of each item, will encourage teens to make their own connections--just as the Post-it notes and arrows helped elementary school kids understand text features. Text trends For years many nonfiction writers have been careful to avoid showing a particular point of view. But recently, some authors have started writing nonfiction in a more personal way, letting their passions show. For example, Tanya Lee Stone's Sibert Medal-winning Almost Astronauts (Candlewick, 2009) is explicitly feminist; Kadir Nelson's We Are the Ship (Hyperion, 2008), also a Sibert Medal winner, features an African American telling the story of the Negro Leagues; and Rebecca Skloot's award-winning The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks (Crown, 2010) is both a medical detective story and a personal account of the author's relationship with the Lacks family. Another emerging trend that we've seen is that more and more writers--including Sy Montgomery, the author of The Quest for the Tree Kangaroo (Houghton, 2006), and Marc Tyler Nobleman, the author of Bill the Boy Wonder (Charlesbridge, 2012)--are adding notes to their nonfiction books that explain why they wrote the book and how they did the research. Some writers also include slide shows or films on their websites, and many of them will visit your school via Skype. (For a list of some of the accomplished nonfiction authors who use Skype, visit Ink Think Tank [http://inkthinktank.com].) There are also an increasing number of books that wear their ideology on their sleeves. For example, the Zinn Educational Project (http://zinnedproject.org), which recommends Howard Zinn's A People's History of the United States (Harper Perennial, 2005) to teach middle and high schoolers about their nation's history, also features young adult books that are in sync with the author's leftist approach to social history. By contrast, Regnery's Little Patriot Press (www.littlepress.com), which publishes books for kids ages five to eight, explicitly takes a conservative approach. These and other titles provide great opportunities to show your students that history often comes with a particular POV. On the simplest level, clustering means displaying books together with signs that highlight their differences. But to do that, you need to know your informational and narrative texts well enough to pinpoint their distinct approaches and how they relate to each other in interesting ways. To help you get started, we've included some clusters that have been created during our workshops (see "Are you ready to cluster?" on opposite page). As you create your own, visit us at our blog "Clustering" (http://mbcurl.me/GGS), and let us know what you've done. Beginning this month, we'll post your ideas at "The Uncommon Corps" (http://ow.ly/eLhpc). Remember, we're are all in this Common Core experiment together, and we all need to learn from one another. Are you ready to cluster? Here are some outstanding resources on the following topics: Space (grades 2-4) Team Moon: How 400,000 People Landed Apollo 11 on the Moon (Houghton, 2006) by Catherine Thimmesh. For this well-researched book with quotes from the people behind the scenes, the author consulted NASA transcripts and photos and national archival records to tell the story of the first moon landing. Moonshot: The Flight of Apollo 11 (Atheneum, 2009) by Brian Floca. Floca's crisp text and remarkable illustrations bring this historic mission to life. Mission Control, This Is Apollo (Viking, 2009) by Andrew Chaikin. A clear-eyed view of space history from the Mercury missions through Apollo 17 and beyond, which includes illustrations by astronaut Alan Bean, who walked on the moon with Pete Conrad on the Apollo 12 mission. NASA for Kids (http://ow.ly/eLl2t). This site offers a wealth of suggested activities and information that kids will find useful when they're exploring the space program. The Civil Rights Movement (grades 5-8) Master of Deceit: J. Edgar Hoover and America in the Age of Lies (Candlewick, 2012) by Marc Aronson. An examination of America during J. Edgar Hoover's long reign as head of the FBI. Freedom's Children: Young Civil Rights Activists Tell Their Own Stories (Puffin, 2000) by Ellen Levine. Thirty African Americans, who were children or teenagers during the 1950s and '60s, talk about what it was like to fight segregation in the South. Paul

Robeson: A Voice for Change (Enslow, January 2013) by Patricia C. McKissack and Fredrick McKissack. A brief biography that covers the acclaimed singer and actor's international career, as well as his experience of being blacklisted as a controversial political activist. We've Got a Job: The 1963 Birmingham Children's March (Peachtree, 2012) by Cynthia Levinson. A moving account of the 4,000 African-American students who marched to jail to secure their freedom in May 1963. The 1963 Inaugural Address of Governor George C. Wallace (http://ow.ly/eLj50).Created by the Alabama Department of Archives and History, the website presents the former governor's inaugural address, which is commonly referred to as the "segregation" speech. George Wallace--Segregation Forever (http://ow.ly/eLk3j). A YouTube video of a speech in which Wallace encourages segregation. The Great Depression (grades 9 and up) Franklin Delano Roosevelt (Clarion, 1990) by Russell Freedman. Photographs and text trace the life of FDR from his birth in 1882 through his youth, early political career, and presidency, to his death in Warm Springs, GA, in 1945. FDR (Random, 2007) by Jean Edward Smith. The author uses a wide range of primary source materials to add depth to this biography of our nation's 32nd president. FDR Prolonged the Great Depression (http://ow.ly/eLlf4). This page on the Open Left website provides background information about the Great Depression, which will help researchers of any age understand this tough time in our nation's history. Critics of the New Deal (http://ow.ly/eLkbM) Here's a great place to research the New Deal's critics, including those on the Left and the Right. The Holocaust (grades 5-8) Parallel Journeys (Aladdin, 2000) by Eleanor Ayer. A survivor of Auschwitz and a member of the Hitler Youth recount their war experiences and tell how they met again, 40 years later. Hitler Youth (Scholastic, 2005) by Susan Campbell Bartoletti. This superb book explores how Hitler gained the loyalty and trust of so many of Germany's young people. It also includes interviews with surviving members of Hitler Youth. We Are Witnesses: Five Diaries of Teenagers Who Died in the Holocaust (Square Fish, 2009) by Jacob Boas. David, Yitzhak, Moshe, Eva, and Anne kept diaries that were discovered after these Jewish teens were killed in Hitler's death camps. These are their stories, in their own words. Beyond Courage: The Untold Stories of Jewish Resistance During the Holocaust (Candlewick, 2012) by Doreen Rappaport. These 21 meticulously researched accounts--some chronicled in book form for the first time--illuminate the defiance of tens of thousands of Jews across 11 Nazi-occupied countries during World War II. Holocaust Denial from the Jewish Virtual Library (http://ow.ly/eLi6a). This website discusses the anti-Semitic-propaganda movement, which, against all evidence, refuses to acknowledge that the Holocaust ever happened. AuthorAffiliation Marc Aronson is the author of Master of Deceit: J. Edgar Hoover and America in the Age of Lies (Candlewick, 2012) and a longtime advocate of including information on how and why a book was written in one's nonfiction works. Susan M. Bartle is the school library system director at New York's Erie 2-Chautauqua-Cattaraugus BOCES .

Subject: Teaching methods; Reading; Librarians; Education reform; Academic standards; School libraries; Educational materials

Location: United States--US

Classification: 9190: United States; 1200: Social policy; 5200: Communications & information management; 8306: Schools and educational services

Publication title: School Library Journal

Volume: 58

Issue: 11

Pages: n/a

Publication year: 2012

Publication date: Nov 2012

Year: 2012

Section: Features

Publisher: Media Source

Place of publication: New York

Country of publication: United States

Publication subject: Publishing And Book Trade, Education, Library And Information Sciences

ISSN: 03628930

Source type: Trade Journals

Language of publication: English

Document type: Commentary

ProQuest document ID: 1125124321

Document URL: http://search.proquest.com/docview/1125124321?accountid=44871

Last updated: 2013-04-30

Database: ProQuest Discovery,ProQuest Research Library
